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April 24, 2007

Abuse cases up slightly in Wayne County

Kim Kozlowski / The Detroit News

Confirmed cases of child abuse increased slightly in nine Wayne County communities, according to a report released today by the Mayor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect.

In 2006, 2,244 referred cases of child abuse were confirmed, an increase of 1 percent over 2005, according to the report, which targets youth living in Detroit, Hamtramck, Highland Park, Harper Woods and the five Grosse Pointe communities.

Another 5,153 cases were classified as cases of children at risk of child abuse, according to the report.

"We have many children in eastern Wayne County who have been abused and many more are at risk of being abused and neglected," said Carol Quarterman, director of the Wayne County Child Care Coordinating Council.

Several mayors and representatives from the eastern Wayne County communities called on their residents to report suspected child abuse in their neighborhoods, and not turn the other way.

"Most people are afraid to report," said Sharon King, president of the Detroit Exchange Club, which focuses on ending child abuse.

You can reach Kim Kozlowski at (313) 222-2024 or kkozlowski@detnews.com.

Getting help

Here's how to report child abuse and neglect:

- Call your local police agency.
- Call the local Department of Human Services office.
- Call the Parent Help Line in Michigan: (800) 942-4357.
- Call Crime Stoppers and leave an anonymous tip: 1-800-SPEAK UP.
- Call Childhelp USA National Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-4-A-CHILD.

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MIRS Capitol Capsule, Tuesday, April 24, 2007

CTF Auction Reaching For \$400,000

This year, the goal of the Children's Trust Fund (CTF), which provides assistance for victims of child abuse, is to raise \$400,000 at its annual auction.

The doors for the auction open at 5 p.m., Tuesday, May 1 at the Breslin Center on the Michigan State University campus. Everything from a Tom **IZZU**-signed basketball to Oprah **WINFREY** show to American Idol tickets will be up for bid.

"Child abuse is a crime that occurs in hundreds of Michigan homes of each day, and impacts the lives of thousands of Michigan's children every year," said CTF executive director Rich **BEARUP**. "Our 'Ultimate Fantasy Auction' is a positive and fun way for Michigan residents to raise money for the Children's Trust Fund to help stop the abuse and neglect of Michigan's children."

The auction is one of two funding sources for the CTF and last year the auction brought in \$375,000. The other funding option is an income tax check off that's specifically designated for the CTF.

The CTF provides public education, training and technical assistance and supports a network of local, community-based child abusive prevention programs across the state.

It's the only statewide non-profit dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Since 1982, the fund has raised more than \$80 million and provided support to more than eight million Michigan children and families.

The auction is being co-chaired by Sens. Patty **BIRKHOLZ** (R-Saugatuck Twp.), Martha G. **SCOTT** (D-Highland Park) and Randy **RICHARDVILLE** (R-Monroe) and Reps. Craig **DeROCHE** (R-Novi) and Michael **SAK** (D-Grand Rapids).

Vigil to help promote sexual assault awareness

By PATTY RAMUS

Sexual assault is the most under reported crime in the United States.

Residents of Alpena and surrounding areas will have the opportunity to learn more about sexual assault and what they can do to help victims cope with it at the sexual assault candlelight vigil taking place today at 6:30 p.m. at the Alpena Montmorency Alcona Educational Service District building. The vigil is hosted by Shelter, Inc.

"Within our community we don't talk about sexual assault enough. For a lot of people it's an uncomfortable subject to talk about," said Laura Kearly, Shelter sexual assault prevention advocate and children's program coordinator. "By creating awareness we can work on preventing sexual assault."

According to Kearly, 40 percent of women have experienced some form of sexual violence ranging from unwanted touch to forcible rape since the age of 16. Between one-third and two-thirds of sexual assault victims are ages 15 and younger and 13.3 percent of college women have indicated they have been forced to have sex in a dating situation.

Kearly said most cases go unreported because the victims feel responsible, are afraid to talk about it or it's traumatic to describe the experience.

"It's not their shame to carry and sometimes it's hard for people to recognize that it's not their shame to carry," she said.

The vigil will commence with a prayer from Sandra Hall of Community Christ Church in Alpena and opening remarks from Shelter Executive Director Sandra Pilgrim-Lewis.

Jordan Morris, Miss Iosco Outstanding Teen, will perform a song and area resident Audrey Liske will tell her survival story about sexual assault. The vigil will conclude with a speech entitled "Let Your Light Shine" from Lisa Melendez.

Refreshments will be available and information about how to protect children as well as how friends and family can help victims cope with sexual assault will be handed out, Kearly said.

Patty Ramus can be reached via e-mail at pramus@thealpenanews.com or by phone at 354-3111 ext. 315.

MIRS Capitol Capsule, Tuesday, April 24, 2007

Clearing Out Prisons With Domestic Violence Treatment

Addressing domestic violence issues with prisoners and their partners while the prisoners are in jail could reduce domestic violence incidents and free up jail space, a national expert on domestic violence prevention told a joint Senate panel this afternoon.

Oliver **WILLIAMS** told a joint the Senate Family and Human Services and Judiciary committees that domestic violence prevention can start in the prisons.

Williams has been involved in what is called the "Safe Return Initiative," which focuses on treating men who are domestic violence perpetrators while they're in prison and again when they leave prison.

When these men are in prison, they frequently control the women in their lives even though they are technically behind bars. Through prison networking they get people on the outside to keep an eye on the women and either confront them or punish them when they've done something the prisoner doesn't like.

The idea is that if these men are treated while they're in prison, they won't have this kind of control over their victims. On the same token, the women involved in these relationships also need to get treatment while the man is in jail.

Once the person is released, they need to get involved in community programs that will make them accountable for their actions, Williams said. This continued domestic violence prevention can also be intertwined with substance abuse and other treatment programs, he said.

Aside from helping the victims of domestic violence, this type of model could help clear out prisons and keep kids out of the child welfare system. Williams pointed out that these men generally aren't in prison on domestic violence charges however, they frequently return to jail because of domestic violence related crimes.

"A large reason these men come back to prison is domestic violence," he said.

Sen. Mike **PRUSI** (D-Ishpeming) asked if Williams had any concrete data backing up these assumptions.

Williams said because the research is fairly new, he didn't have any data.

"I personally do believe it would be worth it," Prusi said about preventing domestic violence in the jails. "We really should be talking to the corrections budget people to fold a program like this into the prisoner re-entry program."

Prusi asked Williams to pass along any data that he collects while testing out domestic violence prevention in prisons.

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Article published Apr 24, 2007

LOCAL: LACASA project to raise awareness

In recognition of April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month, LACASA is hosting its ninth annual Clothesline Project, a public display that addresses issues of sexual violence and child abuse in Livingston County.

Sexual violence and child abuse affects all walks of life impacting not only the survivors, but friends, family members and the community.

The Clothesline Project is on display until Friday at the Howell Carnegie Library, Fowlerville District Library, Brighton District Library, Pinckney Public Library and Cleary University.

For more information about the Clothesline Project, call LACASA at (517) 548-1350.



Student arrested after barricading himself, teacher and schoolmates in class

April 24, 2007

By CHRISTY ARBOSCELLO

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A 16-year-old Detroit boy barricaded himself, a teacher and approximately 15 other students inside a classroom today at Riverside Alternative Education in Mt. Clemens, police said.

"He was upset. Something having to do with a cell phone," Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel said.

Someone inside the building called 911 late this morning after the boy wouldn't allow anyone to leave the room for a short time. When deputies arrived, they had to push him away from the door.

"He didn't have any weapons on him. He was just a very large kid," Hackel said.

Deputies had to use pepper spray to subdue him. He was brought to Mt. Clemens Regional Medical Center for treatment and is expected in the Juvenile Justice Center.

Authorities are determining what charges he will face.

An officer who inadvertently breathed the pepper spray also was treated at the hospital.

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Helping the uninsured

Medical Care Access Coalition assists Dickinson-Iron residents

IRON MOUNTAIN — The Dickinson-Iron Medical Care Access Coalition has served 468 uninsured residents of Dickinson and Iron counties from the time its doors opened in the fall of 2004 through the end of 2006.

During that time, those people received nearly \$450,000 in donated care and medications, reported Dickinson-Iron Medical Care Access Coalition (DIMCAC) Director Benjamin Wood.

Some 34 area doctors and nurse practitioners are making the program possible, along with donations from both the Dickinson and Iron County hospital systems.

The impact the organization is having on the community is beginning to show, Wood said in a statement.

"We've been compiling statistics on our client population since we opened our doors in 2004," Wood said.

"The numbers are being used to really hone in on who the uninsured residents of the area are and how we can best serve them," he said. "We also hope to use the statistics to convince potential donors our mission is worth their financial support. The situation for the uninsured is unlikely to change until something drastic takes place at the state and federal levels."

"Our financial need continues to increase as our client base continues to grow," Wood said in a press release.

According to the Dickinson-Iron Medical Care Access Coalition's 2006 Annual report, the individuals served include:

- 65 percent female.
- 35 percent male.
- 55 percent employed.
- 45 percent unemployed or retired
- For every \$1 spent on care by DIMCAC, more than \$9 donated is being leveraged.
- Nearly 1,900 people in Dickinson and Iron counties are eligible.

"The majority of our clients are hard working people, and many of the others are simply in between jobs," Wood said.

"But the telling statistic for us is the 9 to 1 ratio of donated dollars to actual dollars we spend on care," he said. "It's hard to get much better bang for your buck than that, and it's possible thanks to the generosity of the providers in our community."

DIMCAC is one of five access agencies covering the 15 counties of the Upper Peninsula.

These programs were supported by federal grant funding, but that funding stream has been eliminated at the federal level.

While the agencies will continue to seek grant opportunities, they are also looking to their local community for financial support, Wood said.

Recent contributions include more than \$700 from the Dickinson Area Community Foundation,

\$264 from St. Mark's Episcopal in Crystal Falls, \$1,000 from St. Mary Queen of Peace Church in Kingsford, and \$2,000 from the Church of the American Martyrs in Kingsford.

"We've had a great deal of financial support over the past two years, but the vast majority has been through grants," Wood said.

"We believe we have been able to demonstrate the value of our program during that time, and are now looking to the community to help us pay for our clients' prescription medications and other health care services which are not donated."

"The rising costs of health care affect everyone, and I believe most people have a friend or family member who has been forced to go without. By supporting our program, you support the ideal of access to care for all," he said.

The health access programs across the Upper Peninsula have drawn attention at the state and national level, and the U.P. is one of the only areas in the country where all residents have some type of health coverage available.

Locally, eligible residents live in either Dickinson or Iron County, do not have any form of health insurance, are 19-64 years old, and have an income at 200 percent or less of the federal poverty level (\$20,420 for a single person).

The Dickinson-Iron Medical Care Access Coalition offices are located in Iron Mountain at the Crystal Lake Community Center and in Iron River at the Health Department building.

Individuals with questions about the program, those who are interested in volunteer opportunities, or those who would like to make a financial contribution can call 774-3980 or 265-4044.

The year 2006 was DIMCAC's second full year of operation.

The program was established in 2004 to address the needs of the low-income uninsured residents of Dickinson and Iron counties.

DIMCAC was modeled after a successful pilot program in Marquette County that celebrated its five year anniversary in 2006.

During 2006, DIMCAC was administering services to upwards of 200 active clients during a given month.

Its client base has continued to increase at an exponential rate over the course of the last two years.

From the inception of the program in October 2004 through the end of December 2006, 468 clients were enrolled.

These people were eligible to see one of the program's 31 volunteer doctors/nurse practitioners free of charge, receive donated lab and X-ray testing from the participating hospital systems, and get their medications for free or at a reduced cost.

The UPHAC Board is comprised of members of each of the five local access agencies, and makes decisions regarding policy, funding distribution, etc.

According to the federal government, an estimated 46 million people in the United States are living without health insurance, including thousands in the Upper Peninsula.

Recent statistics indicate that nearly 18,000 people in the U.P. are uninsured, 19-64 years old, and living at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

Of those, around 1,900 people live in Dickinson or Iron County.

"As the number of uninsured continues to grow without a change in state or federal legislation, so too will the demand for these donated services," Wood said.



Muskegon Chronicle

Help stem the tide of infant mortality deaths

Sunday, April 22, 2007

A truly sad statistic for Muskegon County is the grim reality of a disproportionately high infant mortality rate among African-Americans.

We are glad to see it has become a major focus for health care groups and social service agencies.

Spearheaded by Director Ken Kraus and the Muskegon County Health Department, a coalition of care agency representatives recently held a brainstorming session at Muskegon Community College to examine this important issue.

Their consensus view was to establish a comprehensive review of the problem, joining 14 other ongoing Fetal Infant Mortality Reviews throughout Michigan.

Such concern is warranted if solutions are to be found to stem what is not just a public health issue, but an issue tied very closely to social issues such as poverty, poor maternal health, a prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases, domestic violence and other factors outside the general purview of routine health care.

A renewed and concentrated focus on the prenatal care mothers need and a host of neo-natal health issues can only help when battling this complex problem that is killing infants born to African-American mothers in Muskegon County at a disproportionate rate.

The culprit is insidious in that there are a variety of factors contributing to a rate of 17 deaths per 1,000 live births. That's triple the death rate of white infants.

It is unacceptable.

We applaud the interest and dedication of so many caring individuals and agencies attempting to force this deadly statistical curve into a downward path.

May 8 looms as a key election date here

Tuesday, May 8, is an important day to mark on your calendar.

In communities throughout West Michigan, this is the day set aside for annual school board elections, although some communities will also decide on operating millages, libraries, special education programs and other important matters. It is vital that citizens inform themselves about the issues and candidates, and to vote on Election Day.

This column, beginning today, will be summarizing the various proposals and offering our first set of endorsements.

* Casnovia Township, in far-eastern Muskegon County, has set aside May 8 for a five-year renewal of its 1-mill levy for fire equipment. The township also levies nearly a mill for fire operations and training. If approved by township voters, it would raise \$61,621 this year to maintain and, if necessary, purchase new vehicles for the township fire department.

* Another tax issue is on the ballot in Ottawa County, where the Ottawa Area Intermediate School District is seeking a 1.3152-mill property tax over 20 years to fund special education programs not otherwise covered by the state and federal governments. Special education serves one of every seven children in the intermediate district, and costs have risen 7 percent a year since the last millage increase in 1999.

* In Newaygo County's White Cloud, the city, Everett and Merrill townships, and White Cloud Schools are joining forces to build a new district library. To pay for it, it would raise property taxes by 0.08-mill to cover a \$2.1 million bond issue payable over 20 years.

Three communities, three very different kinds of issues. We hope their residents will carefully consider not only how they will affect their pocketbooks, but on the effect they will have, not only on their lives but on those of their neighbors.

Each, in its way, stands to make a significant difference in the overall quality of life of these communities. Thus, our recommendation is to vote "YES" for better fire protection in Casnovia Township, special education for people with handicaps in Ottawa and a fine new library in White Cloud.

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April 25, 2007

Group Proposes Detailed Plan to Reduce Poverty by Half

By [ERIK ECKHOLM](#)

With a large increase in the minimum wage and a handful of other measures to raise the income of low-end workers, the United States could cut the number of people living in poverty by half within a decade, a report from a liberal research group says.

The antipoverty strategy, which would cost the government \$90 billion a year, was developed over the last year by a group of economists, poverty experts and leaders of labor and community groups. It is to be issued today by the Center for American Progress in Washington. It is likely to be a fount of ideas for Congress, where Democratic control has led to new interest in fighting poverty and for candidates, especially Democrats, in the presidential campaign.

According to federal data, 37 million residents lived below the poverty line in 2005, defined as an income of \$20,000 a year for a family of four.

The new strategy reflects a change in the political climate since the welfare overhaul of 1996. That put strict limits on cash welfare that many experts said had reduced incentives to work. The new strategy emphasizes measures to promote work and would use tax credits and other measures to bolster the incomes of low-wage workers.

Peter B. Edelman, a co-chairman of the group and a professor of law at [Georgetown University](#) who advised the Clinton administration on social policy, cited the antipoverty initiatives of Mayors [Michael R. Bloomberg](#) of New York, [a Republican](#), and Antonio Villaraigosa of Los Angeles, a Democrat, as evidence of a growing and widely shared concern.

Many of the proposals in the report seem unlikely to fly unless a Democrat is in the White House.

The panel argues that although the \$90 billion price tag may appear unrealistic amid the current Congressional stalemate over taxes, rescinding tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans would free more than the required dollars.

Other experts, including Douglas Besharov, a public policy scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, say that even the Democrats will be divided on using any money freed by tax changes and that reducing the alternative minimum tax for the middle class may, for example, have a higher priority than the proposed strategy.

Citing studies by the Urban Institute, the report says steps in three areas, costing the government \$50 billion a year, would reduce poverty 26 percent, or nine million people.

First is an increase in the minimum wage to half the average hourly wage. Congress has just agreed to raise the minimum wage, to \$7.25 an hour by 2009 from its current \$5.15 an hour. By the report's standard, the wage would have reached \$8.40 in 2006 and be higher in future years.

Research indicates that such an increase would eliminate a relatively small number of jobs, the institute said, while lifting the

incomes of more than 4.5 million poor workers and nine million people whose incomes are just above the poverty line.

Second, the report calls for expanding the earned-income tax credit and the child care credit. The earned-income tax credit for childless workers and noncustodial parents, in particular, which is now negligible, would increase along with credits for working families. That would reduce the number of poor by two million.

Third, expanding child care subsidies for families with incomes below \$40,000 a year and expanding the child care tax credit would raise employment and help lift nearly three million people out of poverty, the study forecasts.

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April 25, 2007

In Mexican Town, Maybe a Way to Reduce Poverty in New York

By RAY RIVERA

MEXICO CITY, April 24 — For a few days every other month, the narrow sidewalks of Tepoztlán, a scenic mountain town south of here, fill with hundreds of women from surrounding villages, many tugging along children by the hand or carrying infants slung at their waists in rebozos.

They come in by bus or foot and gather in the cool shadows of the municipal auditorium, where government workers sit at tables on the stage, ready to hand out cash.

The women are participants in an antipoverty program that is a model for one that Mayor [Michael R. Bloomberg](#) plans to start in New York City. The mayor traveled to Mexico on Tuesday, joining City Hall officials who arrived two days earlier for a fact-finding trip.

On Monday in Tepoztlán (pronounced teh-pos-LAHN), they watched as about 800 women waited for three hours or more in the auditorium to go up to get their money. If the women and their children have kept all their medical appointments, and if their children have stayed in school, the money is theirs to use as they wish. The awards range from 360 to 3,710 pesos (about \$36 to \$370), enough to buy food or shoes or other necessities. The size of the award depends on how many children they have and what level of school the children are in.

The program is 10 years old, has a budget of more than \$3 billion a year and covers almost a quarter of all Mexicans.

It may seem strange that one of the world's financial capitals should look to a small mountain town for answers to its own urban ills. But since this program got its start in rural Mexico in 1997, it has been heralded by the [World Bank](#) and others as a powerful model for fighting chronic poverty.

Outside evaluations have found that the program, called Oportunidades, has been successful in raising school attendance and nutrition levels. The percentage of Mexicans living in extreme poverty has fallen by 17 percentage points since 1996, when it reached 37 percent.

Those results have spurred some 30 countries to adopt some version of the program.

Before Mr. Bloomberg's arrival here, his deputy mayor for human services, Linda I. Gibbs, and her staff interviewed local doctors, school officials and scholars who have studied the program since its inception.

But will something that works for the impoverished of Mexico help the poor of New York?

"Clearly the economies of the Mexico and the U.S. and New York City are very different," Ms. Gibbs said as she toured the village's medical clinic, where many Oportunidades recipients go for their regular checkups and medical care.

“But what the poor have in common is that they are really struggling to make ends meet, that every day every decision is, ‘Do I do this thing or do I do that thing?’ It’s not a matter of can I go to work and get health care; it’s often a matter of trading it off.”

The program pays cash stipends mostly to mothers — about 97 percent of recipients are women — on the assumption that they will be more likely to spend the money on their children. To qualify, people must be in extreme poverty, roughly defined by officials here as living on less than the equivalent of \$2 a day.

The payments are tied to changes in behavior intended to lift families out of poverty. So the program requires families to keep their children in school and take them for regular checkups. Parents must also attend talks on health, nutrition and family planning.

In addition, pregnant women, infants and breast-feeding mothers receive an iron-fortified supplement to ward off malnutrition.

They also receive small grants to offset the cost of school uniforms and supplies, but many of the women in Tepoztlán said the school grants are not enough to cover the extra costs.

And there are hardships in staying qualified. Getting time off work to get medical checkups can be difficult. And making the trek every two months to receive their cash typically consumes the whole day. Many of the women, when they can find jobs, work as cleaning women or in the cornfields with their husbands.

Luisa Rosa, a participant who is a 35-year-old mother of four, also volunteers to help organize others in the program in her village, Huachinantla, about a 20-minute walk from Tepoztlán, to ensure they keep up with the requirements.

“The truth is, it is difficult,” Ms. Rosa said. “Because sometimes they don’t get permission to get off work, so they don’t go for their medical appointments.”

Some in her village have received notices that they are no longer eligible, she says, but that has been rare.

One woman, Sylvia Hernández-Zavaleta, 47, said the program saved her life. Four years ago, doctors discovered she had pancreatic cancer during one of her required visits to the medical clinic, making early intervention possible.

“And while I was hospitalized,” she added, “I did not have any other income but money from Oportunidades.”

And as for the time-consuming gatherings, academics have also found value in that. In addition to chatting and gossiping, the women also encourage one another.

“They become social gatherings and help shift norms,” said J. Lawrence Aber, a professor of applied psychology and public policy at [New York University](http://www.nyu.edu), who was part of the mayor’s poverty commission that pushed for New York to adopt the program. “It’s a form of social capital.”

Still, there are questions about how much more effective the program can be in lifting large numbers of people permanently out of poverty. The quality of the services they get — particularly education — is poor.

“While they’re spending a lot more time in schools, the impact on learning is mixed,” said Susan W. Parker, an economist in

Mexico City, who has studied the program since its inception under the name Progresa.

And then there is the question of whether they can find a decent job locally, or whether they will feel forced to migrate to the United States.

That issue bothers the program's principal architect, Santiago Levy, a former undersecretary of finance. At an interview at his home in Mexico City, he said, "Progresa is a program to improve human capital; it is not a jobs-creation program."

Oportunidades will never cure poverty in Mexico without major reforms to the country's labor market, Mr. Levy said. Still, he credits the program as one of two major reasons poverty has declined, the other being money sent home from Mexican workers in the north.

"When I first proposed this to the cabinet, I was murdered by some of the ministers," he recalled. "The standard arguments were the husband's going to beat the wife, take the money and go and drink, or they're going to buy cigarettes, or people are going to be lazy."

That has not happened, Mr. Levy said.

"The evidence shows that 99 percent of the time they buy shoes for the children, roof for the housing, food, or they save," he said.

For it to work in New York, Mr. Levy says, the city will have to ensure that it can survive changes in political administrations, as it has in Mexico. Another important component of success for the Mexico program was to keep it free of the political opportunism and patronage that has plagued past antipoverty programs, which with a few exceptions they have largely done, he said.

Under the New York plan, which is still being developed, poor families would be paid up to \$5,000 a year to meet goals like attending parent-teacher conferences, getting regular medical checkups and holding down a full-time job. Participants would get their money through automatic deposits, not by attending a large gathering.

A pilot program is scheduled to begin in September with 2,500 randomly selected families whose progress will be measured against 2,500 families who will not receive the benefits. The pilot program will be privately financed. The city has already raised \$42 million of the \$50 million needed to cover the initial costs. If it is successful, Mr. Bloomberg hopes that public money will eventually go into it.

But there is still a question of how a rural program will translate into an urban setting. Mexico began expanding the program into smaller cities only in 2001, and into larger metropolitan areas in 2004. Mexico City was one of the last areas in the country to get the program. In 2006, only about 18,300 residents there were receiving benefits, according to the program's statistics.

The mayor of Mexico City, Marcelo Ebrard, has been a strong critic of the program, saying that it is too conservative and that at the pace with which it is expanding, it would take two generations to help his city's worst off.

On Tuesday, Mr. Bloomberg and his staff viewed the program in the larger setting of Toluca, an industrial city of about 750,000 about 45 minutes west of Mexico City, where the women gather in a courtyard outside a bank for their money. Later, he met with President [Felipe Calderón](#), though it is unclear if they discussed the program.

While Toluca is a big city, the mayor's delegation did not view the program as it operates in a major metropolitan area like Mexico City, to the frustration of some in his delegation. Ms. Gibbs, the deputy mayor, said this was mainly because the programs are not as developed in the nation's largest cities, and because of scheduling considerations.

Mexican officials say the dropout rate is higher in cities, and the program is more prone to fraud, because families can more easily hide income and household assets that determine whether they qualify for benefits, which could also be an issue in New York.

Mayor Bloomberg acknowledged that the program might not work in the five boroughs.

"But shame on us if we don't have the courage to try things which, if it doesn't work, you will describe as a failure and I would describe as something we should be proud of that we at least tried to help," he said. "We should not walk away from any idea that can possibly help."

Elisabeth Malkin contributed reporting.

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MIRS Capitol Capsule, Tuesday, April 24, 2007

Budget Hole Trimmed To \$399M

The Senate sent to the governor more shifts and accounting changes to the School Aid Fund (SAF) today that effectively trims the hole in this year's state budget to about \$399 million.

The version of **SB 0221** the Senate agreed to on a 37-1 vote today does not have the \$34-per-pupil cut to schools originally tucked into the document, nor does it have the 1.5 percent cut to Intermediate School Districts, leaving the SAF about \$62 million short for the current Fiscal Year (FY) 2007.

But such details may not prove to matter too much anyway, as the May Consensus Revenue Estimating Conference promises to drop state revenues even further and swell the size of the SAF fund to the point where a per-pupil cut larger than \$34-per-pupil will be all but a necessity. The unfortunate vehicle to execute that cut likely will be a pro-rata letter for Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM**.

In total, SB 221 cuts the combined deficit \$347.5 million. The state deficit had been at \$686 million, but various cost increases in state government due to increased public assistance caseload and other factors pushed that number up, to \$399 million.

In a separate vote, the Senate sent its General Fund-cutting budget bill, **SB 0220**, to a joint House-Senate conference committee for further review. Unlike the SAF-cutting bill, the General Fund bill the House kicked back to the Senate looked nothing like what the Senate had wanted.

Despite the differences however, Senate Majority Leader Mike **BISHOP** (R-Rochester) stayed upbeat on the status of budget talks.

"The action to bring closure to the 2007 budget deficit is long overdue and the citizens of Michigan deserve an immediate resolution. I look forward to working directly with (House) Speaker (Andy) **DILLON** (D-Redford Twp.) and his conferees to resolve the 2007 budget crisis," Bishop said in a statement.

The ranking Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, Sen. Mickey **SWITALSKI** (D-Roseville), said he would reluctantly agree to the House-passed version of the bill. Switalski is not particularly pleased that the state could save \$40 million by rearranging how the state pays local schools through the *Durant* settlement.

Taking the money from *Durant* to attempt to patch this year's SAF budget will actually cost the state an extra \$50 million over the next seven years, he said.

"That's a pretty high premium," Switalski said. "It's almost like going to a loan shark."

Sen. Roger **KAHN** (R-Saginaw) was the only Senator to vote against the concurrence for a final vote of 37-1.

SB 0221 makes few cuts that will directly impact school districts, per se. An accounting gimmick first proposed by Granholm that refigures the state's contribution to the Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System (MPSERS) will save \$262 million off the top.

Because the state is losing students, state officials estimate that the state will need to give \$21.25 million less to schools in regular per-pupil grants and another \$20 million less in special education payments, a combined savings of \$41.25 million. The state will restructure the interest it pays on several bonds, saving \$40 million.

The one hard cut to the SAF in SB 221 is a \$5 million cut to 10 new program that were

supposed to go on-line in FY 2007. The Mercy Education Project (\$100,000), Children of Incarcerated Parents grants (\$1.875 million), Book a Month grants (\$500,000), Early Intervention grants (\$400,000), International Baccalaureate grants (\$250,000), Pre-college engineering grant to Kalamazoo (\$100,000), Web-based testing grants (\$1 million), automatic external defibrillators grants (\$100,000), school building security mapping (\$350,000) and positive behavioral support grants (\$300,000).

Also, the bill helps the cash-strapped state to make its May state SAF payment to school districts by moving the payment from Friday, May 19 to Monday, May 21.

In other news, the Senate unanimously passed another budget supplemental, **SB 0404**, that allow the state to spend \$77 million in federal, private and restricted money, including the \$400,000 donation from the state troopers union to avoid State Police trooper layoffs this week. The supplemental also clears the way to the hiring of 45 employees at the Department of Human Services.

It also uses \$887,000 of Environmental Protection Fund revenue to save the Department of Environmental Quality from having to eliminate 20 positions in the Air Quality and Water Management divisions.

Later in the day, the House Appropriations Committee also unanimously voted to move the bill to the House floor.

"Failure to approve this appropriation will result in layoffs," said Senate Appropriations Chairman Ron **JELINEK** (R-Three Oaks).



State setting stage for possible layoff of non-union workers

4/24/2007, 6:33 p.m. ET

By TIM MARTIN
The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — The groundwork is being laid to potentially allow the temporary layoffs of some nonunion state workers to help Michigan deal with its government budget problems.

A commission that helps craft state employment rules is considering changes that would allow some workers to be laid off for up to 20 days. But that doesn't mean the layoffs will happen.

The rule changes could be approved to give state officials another option in their efforts to balance the state budget.

"There are many unknowns about the budget," said Liz Boyd, spokeswoman for Gov. Jennifer Granholm. "This could give some flexibility."

The state's Civil Service Commission is expected to consider the proposed rules changes next week.

The state has more than 15,300 workers who are classified as non-exclusively represented employees. They work in all state departments as managers, supervisors and other groups that aren't represented by labor unions, such as some groups of accountants and auditors.

If any of those employees were to be laid off, they would not be paid for the days of missed work. But they would continue to build credit for health insurance and other benefits.

The layoffs would not apply to state employees who are represented by labor unions.

Granholm has asked state departments to come up with plans to try and cope if the state's budget situation worsens.

With the Senate's approval of an education funding bill on Tuesday, the state still has a projected budget deficit of about \$400 million for this fiscal year. But state tax revenues are falling short of expectations and the budget hole officially could grow larger in May.

Negotiations to settle differences between plans from the House, Senate and Granholm administration continue.

The concept of reducing state payroll with temporary layoffs or furloughs is not new. Some state workers were required to take furloughs in 2004. Other employees deferred wages.

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DHS Board appointments announced

Gladwin County Record

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GLADWIN COUNTY -- Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) announced the appointments of 82 county DHS board members for terms expiring Oct. 31, 2009.

The three-member DHS boards represent communities in an advisory capacity to county agencies. The county board of commissioners appoints two members and the state DHS director appoints the third.

Susan Sprang of Gladwin was appointed to the DHS Board for Gladwin County.

For more information visit www.michigan.gov/dhs.